

65373 U.S. PTO  
07/28/97

LAW OFFICES OF

STEPHEN T. SULLIVAN, P.C.

5060 NORTH 40TH STREET  
SUITE 120  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85018-2140

TELEPHONE: (602) 956-6161  
FACSIMILE: (602) 956-6262

1164 U.S. PTO  
08/901713

07/28/97

July 28, 1997

VIA EXPRESS MAIL

BOX PATENT APPLICATION  
Assistant Commissioner  
for Patents  
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Re: Filing of New U.S. Patent Application  
of Andrea F. Bell for  
"UTILITY APRON"  
Our ref. 400-009

Dear Sir:

We hereby submit the following documents in connection with the filing of this new U.S. patent application:

1. Specification and claims (23 pages, including 3 independent claims and 26 claims total);
2. Abstract of Disclosure (1 page);
3. Declaration and Power of Attorney (2 pages);
4. Verified Statement Claiming Small Entity Status -- Independent Inventor (2 pages); and
5. Check for \$ 451.00 to cover the filing fee.

The filing fee was determined as follows:

Basic filing fee:	\$ 385.00
Independent claims in excess of 3 (0 claims at \$ 40.00 per claim):	- 0 -
Claims in excess of 20 (6 claims at \$ 11.00 per claim):	\$ <u>66.00</u>
Total Enclosed:	\$ 451.00

Please accord this application a serial number and filing date.

Sincerely,



Stephen T. Sullivan  
Reg. No. 32,444

STS/grg  
Enclosures

71164 U.S. PTO  
08/901713  
07/28/97

PATENT APPLICATION OF  
ANDREA F. BELL  
FOR UTILITY APRON

Express Mail Label No. EM353240071US Date  
of Deposit July 28, 1997 I hereby certify  
that this paper or fee is being deposited with  
the U.S. Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office  
to Addressee" service under 37 C.F.R. § 1.10 on  
the date indicated above and is addressed to BOX  
PATENT APPLICATION, Assistant Commissioner for  
Patents, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office,  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Gregory R. Gonyea

TITLE: UTILITY APRON

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to utility aprons useful for retaining various items such as cleaning items and, more specifically, to utility aprons which are adapted for use with support devices, examples of which might include buckets, cans, frames and the like.

Description of the Related Art

There are many instances in which it is useful to have items such as cleaning items retained in a single location for ease of access, storage and transportation. One approach to such item retention, used in the past for retention of tools, involves using an apron disposed in, on or around a container such as a bucket. Such item retention aprons typically have included one or more recesses or pockets into which the items may be disposed.

Such apron designs typically have been limited, for example, in that they are not of suitable size and shape for appropriate retention of a wide range of items. They also have not generally been of suitable size and shape for retaining cleaning items, such as items used in the cleaning of residences and other buildings, and in other cleaning applications. Moreover, the designs typically are not particularly well suited to securely

retaining items of varying sizes within the pockets and easily releasing them from the recesses or pockets.

Objects of the Invention

Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide a utility apron for support devices, which apron is useful for retaining items of various sizes and shapes.

Another object of the invention is to provide a utility apron for support devices, which apron is useful for retaining cleaning items, such as cleaning products and cleaning tools.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a utility apron for support devices, which apron can firmly secure the items to be retained.

Additional objects and advantages of the invention will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be apparent from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the invention may be realized and obtained by means of the instrumentalities and combinations pointed out in this document and its attachments.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention comprises a utility apron for support devices, and a related method. Support devices suitable for use with the invention would include, without limitation, buckets, cans, frames, and the like. Preferably they would be substantially

cylindrical, but again, this is not necessarily limiting.

According to one aspect of the invention, a utility apron is provided for use on a support device having an interior, an exterior, an opening, a lip at the opening, and a longitudinal axis. This utility apron comprises a shell having lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device and an exterior surface for disposition at the exterior of the support device; and a pocket disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell away from the longitudinal axis. The pocket includes a resilient opening. The size of the opening is variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

According to another aspect of the invention, a utility apron is provided for use on a support device as described above, wherein the utility apron comprises a shell having lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device and an interior surface for disposition at the interior of the support device; and a pocket disposed upon the interior surface of the shell toward the longitudinal axis. The pocket includes a resilient opening, the size of which is variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

These and other aspects of the invention may be combined, for example, so that the utility apron includes pockets having resilient openings both on interior and exterior shell surfaces.

The resilient pockets may comprise a number of different designs. They may include, for example, an elastic or elastomeric material which allows the size of the opening to be enlarged under force, but which returns to its normal size when the force is removed. The force typically would be applied by a person gripping a portion of the opening with a finger or fingers and pulling the opening to enlarge it. When an item is placed into the pocket or pockets and the opening is released, the pocket returns to its normal position to grip and better retain the item within the pocket. The pockets may and preferably do comprise a pliable material, such as a fabric or a woven material. Various grades and weights of nylon are preferred for some applications. The resilient opening may comprise a strip of resilient material affixed to the pliable material.

The items which may be inserted into the pocket or pockets may include, without limitation, cleaning items, such as bottles containing liquid, cans, sponges, cleaning cloths, feather dusters, etc. A typical yet merely illustrative example of liquid-containing bottles would be from 16 oz. to 28 oz. size bottles commonly sold as water bottles with snap top lids. This would correspond in some instances to the pocket opening being sized so that the pocket or pockets would have openings when partially but not entirely extended, e.g., when containing and

securing the item, of about 7.5 to about 9 inches in circumference or around the perimeter of the opening.

For these and other reasons, the resilient opening may be between about 4 and 7 inches wide in a normal unstretched position, and preferably about 4.75 inches wide in a normal unstretched position. One or more of the pockets may be sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 7.5 inches when the item is placed in the pocket, one or more of the pockets may be sized to contain an item having a circumference in these circumstances of about 8 inches, one or more may be sized to contain an item having a circumference of about 8.5 inches in this way, and one or more may be sized to contain an item having a circumference of about 9 inches measured in this way.

The method according to the invention comprises incorporating into a pocket of an apron an opening which is resilient. In accordance with the method, aspects of the apron as described above, most notably the resilient pocket or pockets, above may be incorporated into an apron.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawing, which is incorporated in and constitutes a part of this document, illustrates a presently preferred embodiment and method of the invention and, together

with the general description given above and the detailed description of the preferred embodiment and method given below, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

Fig. 1 shows a perspective side view of a utility apron according to a presently preferred embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 shows an elevated perspective view of the utility apron shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 shows the utility apron of Figs. 1 and 2 opened up to illustrate its component parts, including the pockets having resilient openings; and

Fig. 4 shows the components of a pattern from which fabric or like material may be cut and sewn or fastened to create the apron of Figs. 1 and 2.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT AND METHOD**

Reference will now be made in detail to the presently preferred embodiment and method of the invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters designate like or corresponding parts throughout the drawings.

In accordance with the invention, a utility apron is provided for use on a support device having an interior, an exterior, an opening, a lip at the opening, and a longitudinal axis. The support device may comprise a bucket, can, frame, or the like. For reference purposes, the longitudinal axis may be

assumed to have a longitudinal axis which extends through the opening, e.g., substantially perpendicularly to the opening.

A utility apron 10 according to the presently preferred embodiment of the invention is shown in Figs 1 and 2. Apron 10 is suitable for use with support devices such as buckets, cans, frames, and the like. The support device shown in Figs. 1 and 2 is a cylindrical bucket 12. Bucket 12 may have any one of a number of sizes and shapes. It may have a capacity, for example, of 3, 3.5 or 5 gallons. Bucket 12 includes an opening 12a, a base 12b, a lip 12c around the periphery of opening 12a, an interior 12d, and an exterior 12e. A longitudinal axis 12f, which is an imaginary line or construction for reference purposes and not a physical elements, may be assumed to pass through the central interior of bucket 12, through the center of opening 12a and base 12b, i.e., along the longitudinal axis of the cylinder which comprises bucket 12. Bucket 12, used in Figs. 1 and 2 to illustrate the preferred embodiment, is a 5 gallon bucket having opening 12a of about 11.5 inches in diameter and a depth from lip 12c to base 12b of about 14.5 inches.

In accordance with one aspect of the invention, the utility apron comprises a shell having a lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device and an exterior surface for disposition at the exterior of the support device. In accordance with

another aspect of the invention, the utility apron comprises a shell having a lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device and an interior surface for disposition at the interior of the support device.

With reference to the preferred embodiment, apron 10 includes a shell 13 having an interior surface 13a for positioning in interior 12d of bucket 12, and an exterior surface 13b for positioning at exterior 12e of bucket 12. Shell 13 also includes a lip portion 13c for contacting lip 12c of bucket 12.

In accordance with one aspect of the invention, the apron comprises a pocket disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell away from the longitudinal axis of the support device. In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a pocket is disposed upon the interior surface of the shell toward the longitudinal axis of the support device. In both instances, the pocket includes a resilient opening, the size of which is variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

According to another aspect of the invention, the apron includes a first pocket disposed upon the interior surface of the shell, and a second pocket disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell. Preferably, the interior shell surface includes a plurality of such first pockets, and the exterior shell surface

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

includes a plurality of such second pockets. Each of the pockets includes a resilient opening. The size of each opening is variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

Referring again to the preferred embodiment of Fig. 1, apron 10 includes a plurality of pockets 14, for retaining items 16. Items to be retained may include, for example, cleaning items, such as liquid-containing bottles, cans, sponges, cleaning cloths, feather dusters, etc. Pockets 14 have differing sizes and shapes, which may differ depending upon the application and items to be retained. Some of the pockets in apron 10, for example, are specifically sized to conveniently retain 16 oz. bottles, 20 oz. bottles, 24 oz. bottles, 28 oz. bottles, and various sizes in between. A given pocket preferably would be adapted to contain only one or two of these sizes, although this is not necessarily a requirement. On a given apron, preferably there would be a number of pockets, and the pockets of a given apron preferably would not all have the same size. Incidentally, it should be noted that a given apron may include pockets of other designs, such as known pockets having non-resilient openings, in addition to those having the resilient openings.

As best illustrated in Fig. 2, shell 13 of apron 10 may extend primarily inside the support device (interior shell

surface 13a), primarily outside the support device (exterior shell surface 13b), and preferably both inside and outside the support device (both surfaces 13a and 13b). In the presently preferred embodiment, apron 10 extends both inside and outside bucket 12, and therefore includes interior shell surface 13a and exterior shell surface 13b. Pockets 14 correspondingly are disposed both inside and outside bucket 12 on these respective shell surfaces.

Each of pockets 14 includes an opening 18 through which items 16 may be inserted or removed. Openings 18 are resilient. They may comprise, for example, a resilient or elastic material which allows the size of the opening to be enlarged under force, but which returns to its normal size when the force is removed. Examples of such resilient material may comprise rubber, elastic, and the like. Although pockets 14 preferably comprise a pleated pliable material such as a fabric, the resilient opening may comprise a strip of resilient material affixed to the pliable material at the opening. Elastic bands or stripping, for example, as may be obtained commercially from a fabric store, would suffice for some applications. The force to open resilient openings 18 typically would be applied by a person gripping the resilient portion of opening 18 with a finger or fingers and pulling opening 18 to enlarge it. When an item 16 is placed into

one of the pockets 14 and opening 18 is released, the pocket returns to its normal position to grip and better retain that item 16 within the pocket. The resilient material should be sufficiently strong to securely grip the items to be retained so they do not fall out of the pocket or unduly move within the pocket under normal or anticipated usage.

Pocket openings 18 preferably but optionally may be between about 4 and 7 inches wide (i.e., along lip 12e of bucket 12) in a normal unstretched position, and more preferably about 4.75 inches wide in this normal unstretched position. Pockets 14 and their openings 18 may be sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to longitudinal axis 12f of about 7.5 inches, 8 inches, 8.5 inches, and 9 inches, respectively, when the items is placed in the pocket. This corresponds, for example, to such items commonly used in cleaning applications such as liquid bottles having volumes of 16 oz., 20 oz., 24 oz. and 28 oz. The height of the pockets (i.e., in the general direction of longitudinal axis 12f) will vary depending upon the application, but preferably is sufficient to securely retain the intended item to be retained, such as a bottle, container, etc., while allowing a portion of the retained item to be viewable for easy identification and retrieval. Sample heights would be between about 4 and 7 inches, depending on the items intended to

be stored for a given design.

The component parts of apron 10 may comprise a common material throughout, perhaps with the exception of the resilient material, or it may include various types of materials.

Preferred materials for shell 13 and pockets 14 other than the resilient portion may comprise a pliable material such as a fabric or woven material, for example, such as a nylon material.

The method according to the invention comprises incorporating into a pocket of an apron an opening which is resilient. The presently preferred method involves providing an apron such as that described above, which includes pockets having resilient openings. For purposes of illustration and not by way of limitation, the preferred method will be described as it relates to the fabrication of apron 10 according to the preferred embodiment.

Fig. 3 shows utility apron 10 in an opened form, with the ends unstitched, for purposes of illustration. Apron 10 as shown in Fig. 3 would be prepared for use by folding shell 13 along lip portion 13c so that interior surface 13a and exterior surface 13b would rotate into the page toward one another until they met. Stitching or a similar fastening technique then would be used to tack shell corners 13d and 13e to shell corners 13f and 13g, respectively. This would result in apron 10 taking the generally

cylindrical shape shown in Figs. 1 and 2.

Apron 10 may be fabricated in a number of ways. A presently preferred method for fabricating apron 10, however, involves using the fabric patterns of Fig. 4, assembled and stitched or fastened as shown in Fig. 4. With reference to Fig. 4, shell 13 includes shell base A, a left exterior pocket strip B, a right exterior pocket strip C, a left exterior row pocket strip D, and an interior pocket strip E. Shell 13 and the basic pocket strips B-E are made of a nylon fabric. Shell base A and pocket strips B-E are cut from a sheet of nylon in the shapes shown in Fig. 4. Pocket strips B-E are cut larger than the width of the corresponding portion of shell base A (perpendicular to longitudinal axis 12f and along the plane of the drawing sheet) so they will match the dimensions of the appropriate portions of shell base A after the pocket strips have been folded or pleated, as explained below.

Pocket strips B-E are then placed on shell base A in the appropriate places and stay-stitched (1/8 inch). Approximately 6 yards of edging (wide bias - 1 inch) tape is then pressed in half for easier handling and more accurate results. Alternatively, extra wide/double fold bias tape could be used. The "pressed in half" edging (or extra wide/double fold bias) tape is then sewn to the edges of B, C, D, and E. The assembly then should be

pressed with an iron or similar device to flatten, conform and retain the pieces.

Each of pockets 14 is pleated to accommodate size variations in the pocket, from when it is empty to when it contains an item. The pleats may be incorporated into the pockets as follows. On D, the pocket material is folded to create the pleats. The pleats are positioned and pinned. The bottoms of the pockets are sewn to the appropriate border portion of shell base 13h while holding the pleats together. The assembly again should be pressed at this stage.

D is then positioned and sewn to B. The stitching is then reinforced at the top (two places) and at the bottom (one place) of the pockets. On B, the pleats are positioned and pinned in place. The bottom is sewn to hold the pleats in place. The assembly once again should be pressed.

On C, position and pin the pleats in place. The assembly should be pressed. The bottom then is sewn to hold the pleats in place, and the assembly is pressed.

B then should be positioned and pinned to A, and the assembly pressed. The outside edges of B are sewn to A, and the assembly again is pressed. The individual pocket sides should then be sewn on the stitching line. The stitching then should be reinforced at top and bottom of each pocket side, and the

assembly should be pressed once again.

C then should be positioned and pinned to A, and pressed.

The outside edges of C should be sewn to A, and pressed. The individual pocket sides then should be sewn on the stitching line. Stitching should be reinforced at the top and bottom of each pocket side, and they should be pressed.

The pleats then should be positioned and pinned for E, and they should be pressed into place. The bottom of the pocket strip should be sewn into place to hold the pleats in place, and pressed.

Next about 34 inches of elastic tape should be positioned and pinned to E behind the edging (wide bias) tape. Depending upon the thickness of the fabric, the elastic may have to be positioned just below the edging tape. Two rows of stitching should be used on the elastic to securely hold it in place. The stitching should be reinforced at the ends of the elastic.

E should then be positioned and pinned to A, and the combination pressed. The outside edges of E should be sewn to A, and pressed. The individual pocket sides should be sewn on the stitching lines. Reinforcement stitching should be placed at the top and bottom of each pocket side, and the area pressed.

The edging (wide bias) tape then should be sewn to the remaining outside edges of the pockets.

Corners 13d and 13e then would be sewn to corners 13f and 13g, respectively, to give apron 10 its substantially cylindrical shape.

Additional advantages and modifications will readily occur to those skilled in the art. For example, the shape, size, materials, and other aspects of apron 10 may be different than the specific examples shown here. Therefore, the invention in its broader aspects is not limited to the specific details, representative devices, and illustrative examples shown and described. Accordingly, departures may be made from such details without departing from the spirit or scope of the general inventive concept.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A utility apron for use on a support device having an interior, an exterior, an opening, a lip at the opening, and a longitudinal axis, the utility apron comprising:

    a shell having lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device and an exterior surface for disposition at the exterior of the support device; and

    a pocket disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell away from the longitudinal axis, the pocket including a resilient opening, the size of the opening being variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

2. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the pocket comprises a pliable material, and the resilient opening comprises a strip of resilient material affixed to the pliable material.

3. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the resilient opening is between about 4 and 7 inches wide in a normal unstretched position.

4. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the resilient opening is about 4.75 inches wide in a normal unstretched position.

5. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference

perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 7.5 inches when the item is placed in the pocket.

6. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 8 inches when the item is placed in the pocket.

7. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 8.5 inches when the item is placed in the pocket.

8. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 9 inches when the item is placed in the pocket.

9. A utility apron as recited in claim 1, wherein the utility apron includes a plurality of pockets disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell away from the longitudinal axis, each of the pockets including a resilient opening, the size of the opening being variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

10. A utility apron for use on a support device having an interior, an exterior, an opening, a lip at the opening, and a longitudinal axis, the utility apron comprising:

a shell having lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device and an interior surface for disposition at the interior of the support device; and

a pocket disposed upon the interior surface of the shell toward the longitudinal axis, the pocket including a resilient opening, the size of the opening being variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

11. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the pocket comprises a pliable material, and the resilient opening comprises a strip of resilient material affixed to the pliable material.

12. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the resilient opening is between about 4 and 7 inches wide in a normal unstretched position.

13. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the resilient opening is about 4.75 inches wide in a normal unstretched position.

14. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 7.5 inches when

the item is placed in the pocket.

15. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 8 inches when the item is placed in the pocket.

16. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 8.5 inches when the item is placed in the pocket.

17. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the pocket is sized to contain an item having a circumference perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of about 9 inches when the item is placed in the pocket.

18. A utility apron as recited in claim 10, wherein the utility apron includes a plurality of pockets disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell away from the longitudinal axis, each of the pockets including a resilient opening, the size of the opening being variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

19. A utility apron for use on a support device having an interior, an exterior, an opening, a lip at the opening, and a longitudinal axis, the utility apron comprising:

a shell having a lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device, an interior surface for disposition at the interior of the support device and toward the longitudinal axis of the support device, and an exterior surface for disposition at the exterior of the support device and away from the longitudinal axis of the support device;

a first pocket disposed upon the interior surface of the shell, and a second pocket disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell, each of the first and second pockets including a resilient opening, the size of the opening being variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

20. A utility apron as recited in claim 19, wherein each of the first and second pockets comprises a pliable material, and the resilient opening of each of the first and second pockets comprises a strip of resilient material affixed to the pliable material.

21. A utility apron as recited in claim 19, wherein at least one of the pocket openings is between about 4 and 7 inches wide in a normal unstretched position.

22. A utility apron as recited in claim 19, wherein at least one of the pocket openings is about 4.75 inches wide in a normal unstretched position.

23. A utility apron as recited in claim 19, wherein at least one of the pockets is sized to contain an item having a circumference of about 7.5 inches.

24. A utility apron as recited in claim 19, wherein at least one of the pockets is sized to contain an item having a circumference of about 8 inches.

25. A utility apron as recited in claim 19, wherein at least one of the pockets is sized to contain an item having a circumference of about 8.5 inches.

26. A utility apron as recited in claim 19, wherein at least one of the pockets is sized to contain an item having a circumference of about 9 inches.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A utility apron for use on a support device such as a bucket, a can, and the like, having an interior, an exterior, an opening, a lip at the opening, and a longitudinal axis. The utility apron comprises a shell which may include a lip portion for contacting the lip of the support device, an interior surface for disposition at the interior of the support device and toward the longitudinal axis of the support device, and an exterior surface for disposition at the exterior of the support device and away from the longitudinal axis of the support device. The apron further includes a first pocket disposed upon the interior surface of the shell, and a second pocket disposed upon the exterior surface of the shell. Each of the first and second pockets includes a resilient opening, the size of which is variable depending upon the extent to which the resilient opening is extended.

2646650

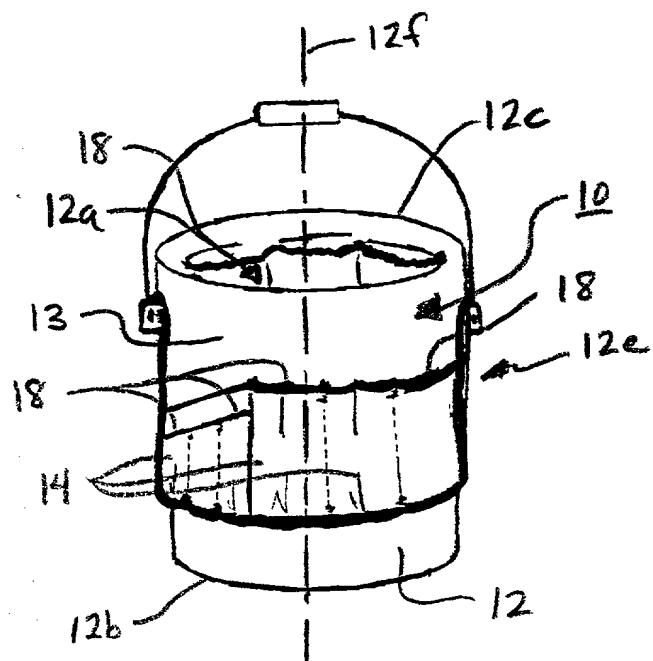


FIG. I

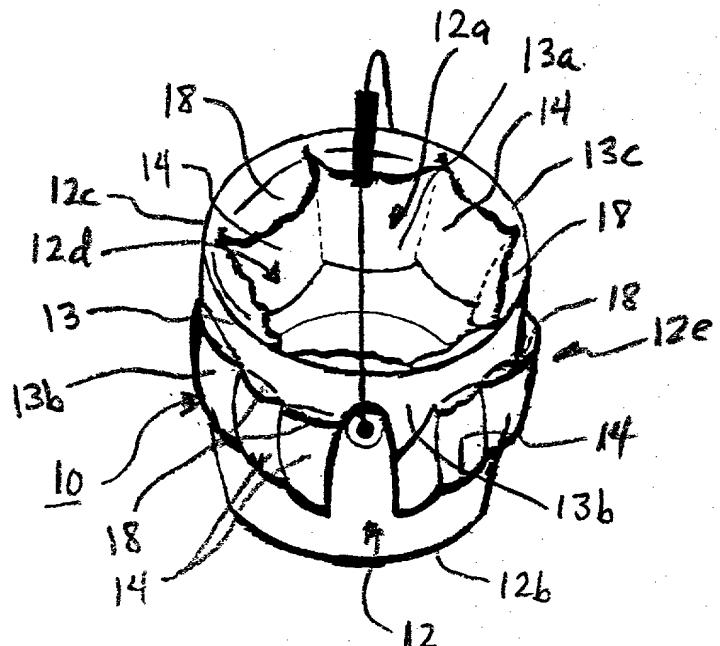


FIG. 2

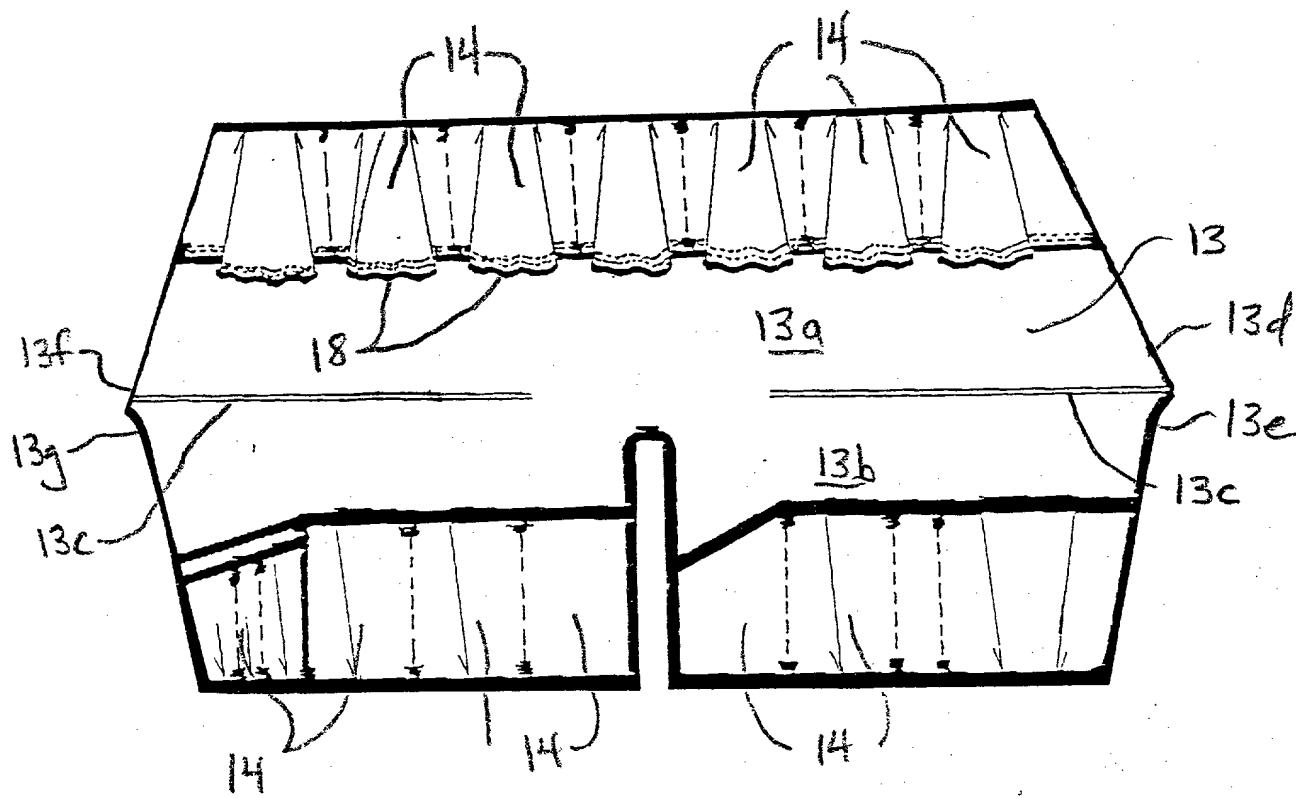
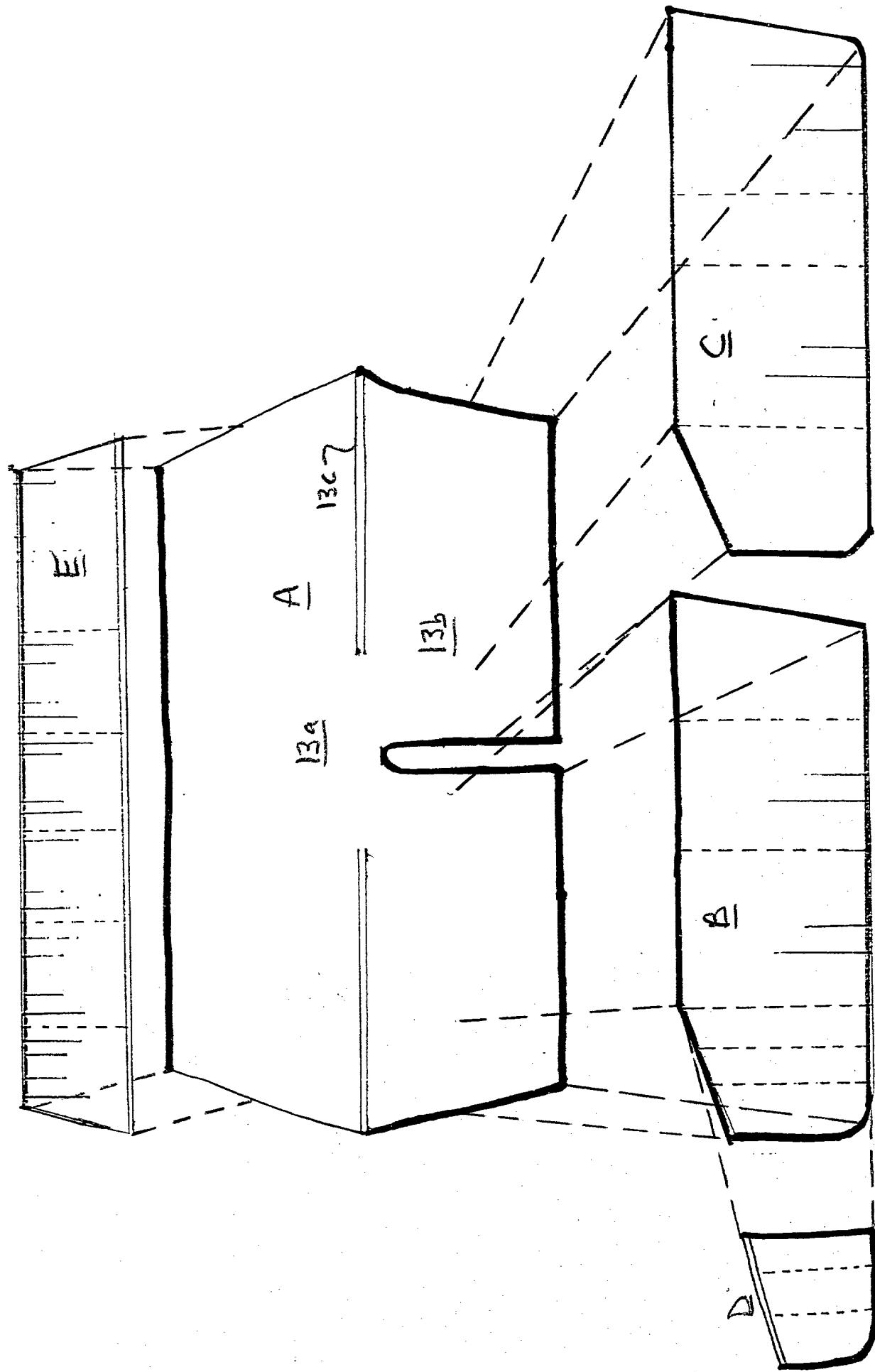


FIG. 3



171 G. 4

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As the below-named inventor, I hereby state and declare as follows:

My residence, post office address and citizenship is stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and only inventor of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention and application entitled, "UTILITY APRON FOR CONTAINERS," the specification of which is attached hereto.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendments referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

PRIOR FOREIGN APPLICATIONS

COUNTRY PRIORITY CLAIM	APPLICATION NUMBER	FILING DATE
		Yes <u>      </u> No <u>      </u>
		Yes <u>      </u> No <u>      </u>
		Yes <u>      </u> No <u>      </u>

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120, of any United States application(s) listed below and, to the extent the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35 United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

RELATED APPLICATIONS

APPLICATION NUMBER (Patented, Pending, Abandoned)	FILING DATE	STATUS

I hereby declare that all statements made herein are of my own knowledge, are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

I hereby appoint Stephen T. Sullivan, Reg. No. 32,444, as my attorney with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith.

Please direct all correspondence as follows:

Stephen T. Sullivan  
5060 North 40th Street  
Suite 120  
Phoenix, Arizona 85018-2140  
Telephone (602) 956-6161  
Facsimile (602) 956-6262

INVENTOR

Andrea F. Bell

Ms. Andrea F. Bell  
16616 East Palisades  
No. 108  
Fountain Hills, Arizona 85268

Post Office Address: Same

Date: 7/28/97

Citizenship: Canada

Applicants: Andrea F. Bell  
Serial No.: Unassigned  
Filed: July 28, 1997  
For: "UTILITY APRON FOR CONTAINERS"

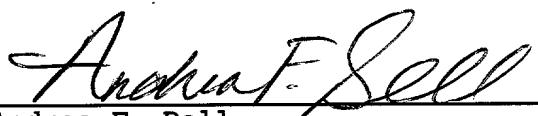
VERIFIED STATEMENT CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY STATUS  
(INDEPENDENT INVENTOR)

I, Andrea F. Bell, the named inventor for the referenced patent application and the owner of the entire right, title and interest in the application by assignment, hereby declare under 37 C.F.R. § 1.27(b) that I qualify as an independent inventor as defined in 37 C.F.R. § 1.9(c) for purposes of paying reduced fees under Section 41(a) and (b) of Title 35, United States Code, to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office with regard to the invention entitled: "UTILITY APRON FOR CONTAINERS."

I have not assigned, granted, conveyed or licensed, and I am under no obligation under contract or law to assign, grant, convey or license, any rights in the invention to any person who could not be classified as an independent inventor under 37 C.F.R. § 1.9(c) if that person had made the invention, or to any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 C.F.R. § 1.9(d), or to a nonprofit organization under 37 C.F.R. § 1.9(e).

I acknowledge the duty to file, in connection with this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in the loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate. (37 C.F.R. § 1.28(b).)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statement may jeopardize the validity of the application, any patent issuing thereon, or any patent to which this verified statement is directed.

  
Andrea F. Bell  
16616 East Palisades  
No. 108  
Fountain Hills, Arizona 85268

Date: July 28, 1997

Express Mail Label No. EM35324007145  
Date of Deposit 7/26/97 I hereby certify that  
this paper or fee is being deposited with the U.S. Postal  
Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service  
under 37 CFR 1.16 on the date indicated above and is  
addressed to the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks,  
Washington, D.C. 20231

